

By Jennifer Delgado September 22, 2010

Solar panels cut energy use



A Des Plaines manufacturing company unveiled 650 solar panels this week – the “largest commercial solar installation,” in the state, officials said.

The new panels are just one part of United Displaycraft’s push to become more green. In the last four years, the company has cut its energy usage by 40 percent but grown 50 percent in sales.

“That’s a pretty remarkable accomplishment,” said company president Rich Carrigan at a ceremony Tuesday. “Usually as you grow, your energy needs should rise with you.”

The roof-top solar panels convert sunlight into renewable electricity and will help the business reduce its energy usage 12 to 15 percent annually. The project cost a little under \$1 million, but with federal stimulus money and a tax credit, the company paid \$425,000, officials said. The photovoltaic panels took about 10 weeks to install.

The manufacturing company, which is on the 300 block of East Touhy Avenue, already has implemented such cost-

saving measures as light motion sensors, waterless urinals and switched to a non-phosphate soap that doesn’t need to be heated for painting their products, helping them cut their natural gas usage by 25 percent.

Carrigan said Wal-Mart also pushed the company, which makes in-store marketing displays, to be “as green as possible.”

Ald. Mark Walsten, who attended the event said he was excited about the project. Walsten is the chairman of Des Plaines Deep Green, which aims to educate people about environmental programs.

“I think it’s fantastic,” said Walsten. “Des Plaines is making a lot of strides with environmental issues.”

The company has roughly 200 employees and has been in business for 57 years.